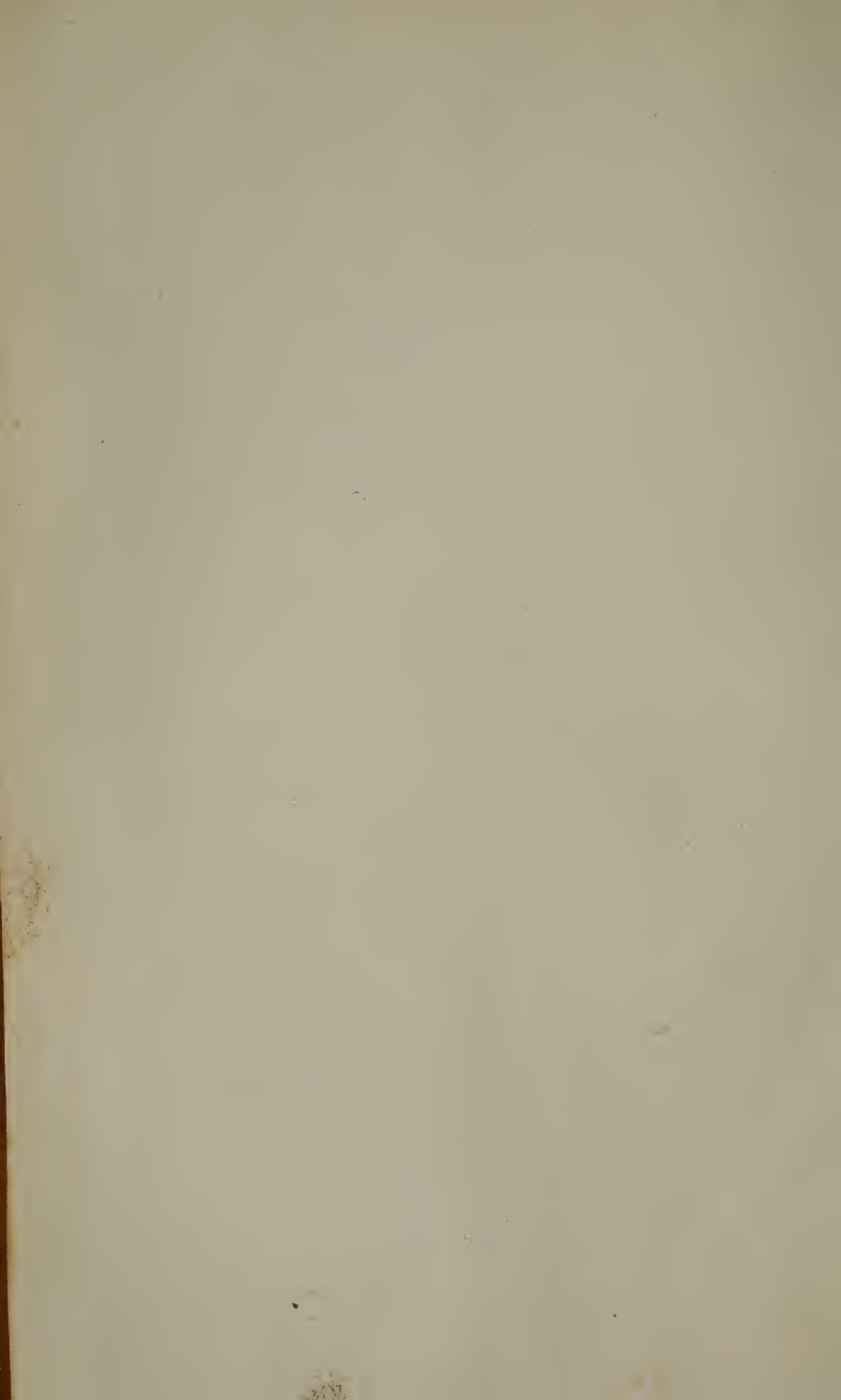


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5.  
THE

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER  
IN SCOTLAND

BEING

TWO SPEECHES

DELIVERED BY HIM IN

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH

ON 29TH AND 30TH OCTOBER 1867

*PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY*

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON  
MDCCCLXVII



A Banquet was given to the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER on Tuesday, October 29, 1867, in the Corn Exchange, Edinburgh, by upwards of twelve hundred of the leading members of the Conservative Party in Scotland—Sir WILLIAM STIRLING MAXWELL, Bart., M.P., in the Chair—to congratulate Mr DISRAELI on the passing of the Reform Bill for England, when the first of the following Speeches was delivered.

The second was spoken in answer to an Address presented by the Working Men of Edinburgh to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the Music Hall, on the evening of the following day.





# S P E E C H

AT

## T H E     B A N Q U E T

IN

THE CORN EXCHANGE, EDINBURGH, OCT. 29, 1867.

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MR CHAIRMAN, MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I know nothing more gratifying in the life of a public man—nothing in its toils and in its asperities more satisfactory and soothing, than an expression of sympathy from a body of his countrymen—nor is that gratification diminished if the sympathy comes from those who are not connected with him by any local sentiment. However much we may value the kind feeling of our neighbours, we are conscious that their estimate of our conduct may not be free from partiality. You may therefore conceive, though I cannot express, what my feelings are at this moment, greeted by this great assemblage of men distinguished by their rank, their character and their intelligence, and representing all classes of the community—and that, too, in the fair capital of a famous nation united to England on equal terms, and in the spirit of honour—and by whose blended influence we have since that union consummated some of the greatest feats of British valour, and achieved some of the most brilliant results of British genius.

In thanking you, Mr Chairman, for the too kind manner in which you have introduced my name to this assembly, I cannot for a moment forget—for you have yourself expressed it with frankness—that it is chiefly to be attributed to the passing of

a memorable measure which has distinguished the present session of Parliament, and with which I have in some degree been connected. I am glad to hear that measure and its fate have been received with favour and confidence in the city of Edinburgh—and the more so because I might otherwise have been deceived by some expressions which had reached me before I visited the country, and supposed that a different opinion both of the measure and of those who are responsible for it prevailed in this city. I had heard, indeed—and the words came from a person of considerable position—considerable if he were only the representative of this great city, but still more so as one who has held high office connected with the administration of the kingdom of Scotland—I had heard that her Majesty's Ministers had carried a measure for which they were entitled to no distinction, since they had only carried a measure for which for more than seventy years the Whig party had toiled in vain—since the period when, in the year 1793, Lord Grey had been defeated by the machinations of Mr Pitt.

Now, my Lords and Gentlemen, I should not take an occasion like the present to treat of the pedigree of parties, though I think myself, and have ever thought, it a subject not to be despised, and full of very serious considerations and consequences—but when a statement like this is made, and made in this city, and upon it is founded a series of arguments which, if left untouched and unnoticed, appear to me to have the tendency of depreciating and misrepresenting the character and conduct of public men, I cannot allow it to pass for a moment utterly uncontradicted. It is important, my Lords and Gentlemen, because it is in another form a revival and repetition of the old party dogma, that upon the most important of political subjects—namely, the question how power should be distributed in the State—one of the great historical parties of England is to be forbidden ever to touch it. My Lords and Gentlemen, on principle—on abstract principle—I should protest against such a dogma—but when it is introduced to us with historical illustrations, and recommended to our notice by an appeal to the annals of our country, and to the deeds of our statesmen, I cannot help pointing out to you and to the country the entire error of the statement. Why, my Lords and Gentlemen, the question of Parliamentary reform, if we are to go to the origin of that question since the constitution of this country was settled upon its present basis, was purely and entirely a Tory question. The question of Parliamentary reform was first introduced to public notice by the great statesmen who flourished at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

What their motives might have been—what were the merits of their measures—it is quite unnecessary for us now to consider or to touch upon, but the fact, and the historical fact remains. The great Tory leaders of that day, no doubt, were in a great minority in the House of Commons; and they believed, as has since been established as a fact, that they were in a great majority in the nation, and therefore they were anxious to alter the principles upon which the representation of the country should take place. Why, you had then motions for shorter Parliaments—motions for extending the suffrage far beyond the settlement of this year. You had motions brought forward even for secret voting, and that by men who, from their birth, their rank, their possessions, and their eloquence, are second to few of the great statesmen that ever flourished in this country. And when we are told that it was by the machinations of Mr Pitt, who defeated Lord Grey in 1793, that the Whigs had been baffled in their perpetual efforts to carry household suffrage for seventy years—and now have been deprived of their rightful heritage by the manœuvres of the Government of Lord Derby—allow me to say that the great leaders at the commencement of the eighteenth century who brought forward these measures for Parliamentary reform, and for a number of years with signal eloquence vindicated and recommended these measures, were defeated by a powerful and no doubt a very intelligent oligarchy, through whose paramount influence for a great number of years these opinions were in abeyance. But reaction is the law of life. A time came when, at a period of public calamity, the country began to doubt whether it was wise to intrust to an oligarchy the most considerable portion of the power of the State, and began to believe that they ought to trust more to the power of the Sovereign and the independence of the nation; and when these opinions became prevalent shortly after the American war, and when the man, as always happens, appeared to advocate these opinions, who was that man? Why, it was a youth who had formed his mind by studying the conduct of the great statesmen of the commencement of the century. It is upon record that he gave up his days and nights to the study of their eloquence. His principles of finance and commerce he found in that treaty of Utrecht which was baffled by faction, and which would have given us the advantages of that free trade, now so much vaunted, a century before or more. There, too, he found those principles of religious toleration which now have been adopted; and among other matters—Parliamentary reform—and he advocated it as the means by which alone

he could control the oligarchy then predominant. And who was that youthful statesman? It was the son of Chatham—that very Mr Pitt who we are now told by his machinations prevented Lord Grey, and has for seventy years prevented the Whig party, from conferring upon the English people the boon of household suffrage.

My Lords and Gentlemen, no doubt in 1832 Lord Grey, perfectly entitled to take the line which he did—Lord Grey fairly earned the leadership upon that question of Parliamentary reform; but when Lord Grey made his Government he never pretended that in the policy which he recommended he was recommending a policy peculiar to the Whig party. On the contrary, he said from the first that it was impossible for him to form a Government except it was upon a broad basis. He appealed, and successfully appealed, to the followers of Mr Canning—brilliant men, experienced in administration; but that was not enough, though it gave him experienced colleagues. He felt that he could not succeed in forming a Government without a considerable support from the Tory party, and he appealed to the Duke of Richmond, the father of one of my colleagues—a man whom you must all have known, and remember, and love—he appealed to him to form a portion of his Cabinet, and if the Duke of Richmond had not become a member of that Cabinet, I much doubt whether Lord Grey's Government would have been established. Therefore, I say that nothing can be more idle than this statement recently brought forward, that we have invaded a land upon which we had no right to enter—that they, our political opponents, had a vested interest in this question of the representation of the people; that for seventy years they have been toiling in order to confer the boon of household suffrage upon the people of England, and that we have come forward in a manner most unauthorised, at the last moment, and are claiming a reputation for a result to which we are not entitled. I readily admit, and our excellent Chairman has noticed it, that after the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed, Sir Robert Peel, by that important political paper, the Tamworth Manifesto, and by his speeches in the House of Commons, pledged the Tory party not to disturb that settlement. It was then the habit of those who passed the Reform Bill of 1832, and who, to their great surprise, found that only two or three years afterwards there was a danger of a Tory Government being formed—it was then their habit to circulate that the only object of Sir Robert Peel and his adherents, when they acceded to office, which they felt was impending, was to repeal the Reform Bill, and Sir Robert Peel, with what was universally



deemed great prudence, entered into that compact, the deep wisdom of which I myself confess I have always had some doubts. But whether it was a wise step on the part of Sir Robert Peel or not, no one will deny that that compact was religiously observed by the Conservative party. Every man who ever acted with them most scrupulously assisted Sir Robert Peel in carrying that compact into fulfilment; and I never heard it for a moment whispered that we ever departed from that public engagement. Well, but of course when the very Minister who brought forward in the House of Commons the Bill of 1832—Lord Grey's Bill—announced only twenty years after it was passed, in the year 1852, himself then in the high capacity of Prime Minister of England, that that law was no longer adequate to the circumstances, and that he should himself introduce a measure which would supersede it—the Tory party were immediately freed from the engagement into which they had entered, and it was for them to consider the course that they ought to pursue. I touch, my Lords and Gentlemen, upon this point because it is a matter which now has, for a very long time, circulated with impunity, but with mischievous impunity, in the country. I want to show to you that our title was clear, even historically, to deal with the greatest and most important of political questions—namely, the distribution of power in the State. After Lord John Russell had announced that he had retreated from his doctrine of finality, and that he should take an opportunity of introducing a new Reform Bill, there was a meeting of the most considerable men at that time connected with the Tory party. Sir Robert Peel had then unfortunately quitted this scene; but there were such men as Lord Derby himself—others, some of whom are now in his Cabinet—there were men who have left us like Sir Robert Peel—there was Lord George Bentinck, there were Mr Bankes and others, men associated in the public mind with the maintenance of what are called high Tory opinions, many of them—they met, they considered the circumstances of the case, they conferred with their adherents, they arrived at a definite and determined conclusion, that under no circumstances whatever was the Tory party ever to be induced to oppose a new Reform Bill—that they would always assist its introduction, and then attempt to mould it into that form which they believed would be most advantageous to the country. To that resolution, passed nearly twenty years ago, they have invariably and religiously adhered; and I can only say for myself, that from the time I ever presumed at the request of my friends to take any lead in public affairs, I have never omitted any opportunity of claiming, whenever this question was brought

forward, the right of the Tory party to deal with it, deeming that historically we had as good and a better right than our opponents, but that totally irrespective of these considerations it was a fatal position that one of the great constitutional parties of England should commence their programme by the admission, that upon the most vital and interesting of public questions they were to be considered to be debarred from ever interfering. Well, then, I think, my Lords and Gentlemen, it must be agreed, notwithstanding the speech which has recently been delivered in the city of Edinburgh, that the question of Parliamentary reform was a question free to the Tory party to deal with if they deemed proper. I put it first upon the abstract political ground; secondly, if necessary—it is not necessary—I vindicate it upon historical facts so totally opposed to that perverted statement which recently has been made in this city.

Well, my Lords and Gentlemen, if the question is one which we had a right to deal with, the next question—and it is a much more important one—is this:—Having a right to deal with it, ought we to have dealt with it? Well, now it does appear to me that any man of sound mind—any man accustomed to consider political affairs—must have felt it was absolutely necessary for Lord Derby, in 1866, to deal with this question. Why, what are the facts of the case? They are these. For fifteen years—from 1852 till the end of 1866—the Government of the Queen, not merely the House of Commons, had been dealing with the question of Parliamentary reform. It is a totally different thing for the Government of the Queen to deal with a question, and a mere Parliamentary party, who may endeavour to obtain the public confidence and public applause by supporting a particular line of policy. A question may be a Parliamentary question, like the abolition of slavery and many other questions, and it may be right that they should not be precipitated in their solution, and should be matured by frequent and continuous discussions—not merely of years, but if necessary in some questions of generations; but the moment the Queen's Government comes forward and says that a question ought to be settled, the country has a right to suppose that the wisest men have given their consideration to it, and that State necessity requires that some settlement should be arrived at. You might say that it was merely the Whig party who were of this opinion. But is that the case? Every Prime Minister during these fifteen years, and every party that has been in power during these fifteen years, had announced from the Throne that the question of Parliamentary reform, which is the question of distribution of power

in the State, was one which demanded consideration and settlement. Every Prime Minister and every party had dealt with the question, and had failed. Lord John Russell had dealt with the question, and had failed. Lord Aberdeen, at the head of one of the most powerful Governments, so far as personal talent was concerned, that ever existed in this country, had dealt with the question, and had failed. Lord Palmerston had dealt with the question, and had failed. Lord Derby had dealt with the question, and had failed; and afterwards Lord John Russell had dealt with the question again, and had failed. Well, you talk about agitation in the country; you talk of the unprincipled conduct of men practising on the passions of the people for their self-interests and private ends; but what a premium do you give for agitation when, year after year, the Ministry of the Queen announce that the most important political question, the one that concerns the rights of every individual in the country, requires settlement: and year after year, Ministry after Ministry, the attempt is made and no settlement arrived at. Why, what is the practical conclusion, under such circumstances, at which every man would arrive? Why, the practical conclusion must be this, and everybody feels it, and everybody felt it, in England, that the Government of the country—the great governing machine—was not adequate to the occasion, that it could not meet the difficulty. Well, if the Government of the country is not adequate to that which the Government of the country says is necessary to be accomplished, why, what is that but a premium to revolution? Well, my Lords and Gentlemen, I have ventured, I think, to show that we had a right as a party to deal with this question of Parliamentary reform, that this convenient creed that has been circulated of late throughout the country, and has been preached so recently in this good city of Edinburgh, that the treatment of Parliamentary reform is the peculiar appanage of the Liberal party—is one that is absurd in principle and is not true in historical fact. I think I may take it to be admitted that we, as a party, had a right to deal with the question. I have shown you it is equally clear that, having the freedom of dealing with the question, it was our duty to deal with it—that State necessity required that we should deal with the question, and that we should not fulfil our duty to our Sovereign or the country if we had evaded dealing with the question. Now I come to the third point of this inquiry. Having a right to deal with the question, and feeling that we ought to deal with it—both of which points I think you will agree are proven, did we deal with the question in the right manner?



Now, my Lords and Gentlemen, I say that no man can form a fair and accurate opinion upon that momentous question unless he clearly ascertains, in the first place, what were the relations of Lord Derby and his party to this question of Parliamentary reform. Lord Derby acceded to office as Prime Minister for the first time in 1852, Lord John Russell having then just failed on the question of Parliamentary reform. It was not necessary for Lord Derby in 1852 to deal with the question; and everybody felt that, however wise it might be to consider it with regard to ultimate settlement, there was no pressure for immediate solution. The measure of Lord John Russell of 1852 was generally considered even by his friends—though I think there was much to vindicate his course, to which I may afterwards advert—an immature movement. Well, when we came into office in 1852, though it was not necessary to deal with the question of reform, it was necessary in 1852 to make up our minds as to the general policy we should adopt on that subject; because although we need not bring forward a measure, the Opposition, who then for three years had agitated upon the subject, were quite certain to bring forward motions upon the matter, and upon these motions the Government must be prepared to express their general policy. And so it turned out. We had not been in office ten days before notice of motions on Parliamentary reform—some complete and comprehensive schemes, some of an isolated character—were showered upon the table like a snow-storm. Mr Hume gave notice of a motion which he had annually made for three or four years, and the pressure of which motion had forced Lord John Russell to introduce a bill—of making the same motion about a month after we acceded to office. The Government of Lord Derby had therefore to consider the course they would take, and the general policy they would announce. It fell to my lot—I hope, my Lords and gentlemen, you will not think me egotistic if I speak, in these few remarks I shall make, a good deal of myself. It is convenient for narrative, but what I did I did not merely with the sanction of my colleagues, but ever with their counsel and advice. It fell to my lot, then, in the year 1852, as leader of the House of Commons, to express the policy of Lord Derby on the subject. It is upon record. It is upon the authentic annals of what is done in the great assembly at Westminster. I had to express the policy of Lord Derby. We were not prepared, we told the House of Commons, in answer to the motion of Mr Hume and those made by Mr Locke King and others—we said we were not prepared to deal with the question of Parliamentary reform; but we claimed our



right even then if we thought necessary to deal with it. But we said, if it be necessary on any future occasion to deal with the representation of the people, it is our opinion that a very great mistake was made on that subject in the year 1832. It was the manner in which Parliament abolished the relations between the labouring classes and the constitution of this country—and I said then, on the part of Lord Derby, that if ever we felt it to be our duty to deal with the question, we should endeavour to remedy that great deficiency, as we believed it to be the real cause of the discontent which prevailed upon this subject, and which frequently expressed itself in a manner which no statesman would despise, and might on future occasions prove inconvenient and injurious. There was another great feature of policy with regard to that question to which I also on that occasion in that year called the attention of the House of Commons. I said if there is ever to be another Reform Bill, we can consent to no new measure unless adequate justice is done to that majority of the population who live in the counties. Now, those were the two great points on the part of Lord Derby—the two great conditions which we publicly announced as a party we should insist upon if ever we had to deal with the question of reform. Well, in 1852, after the retirement of Lord Derby, Lord Aberdeen introduced a very considerable measure of reform and failed. Then came the Government of Lord Palmerston. The Government of Lord Palmerston was much employed with the Crimean war, and that was supposed to be an excuse, and was a fair excuse, for his not continuing to legislate on the subject of reform; but mark this important fact. When allusions are made, and in a certain sense justly made, by my honourable friend the Chairman to Lord Palmerston's feeling on the subject of reform, Lord Palmerston, after his successfully carrying to a conclusion the Crimean war, appealed to the country in a most triumphant manner, and obtained the largest majority that any Minister has had since the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed. And what did he do? The moment that Parliament met, he advised her Majesty to recommend in the Speech from the Throne that legislation on the subject of Parliamentary reform should be introduced. Therefore you may say that Lord Palmerston had failed in this matter when by an unexpected event Lord Derby found himself in 1859 again Prime Minister; and I am bound to say this, that whatever the levity of Lord Palmerston upon the subject of Parliamentary reform in public, he had none in private. Because he communicated to his successor, the present Prime Minister of England, that he thought it of the greatest importance that this question should be settled. That

it embarrassed the Crown, that it embarrassed Parliament, that it might be a source of disorder to the State, and that if a temperate and well-considered measure were introduced he would give it a fair and candid consideration. Now, I have no doubt that what my honourable friend said as to Lord Palmerston's conduct on the subject of reform in the House is correct, for I have often witnessed it. I remember the countenance of Lord Palmerston when Mr Baines brought forward his motions for reform. It would require a great artist to do justice to it. But I have always drawn this inference from these circumstances, that Lord Palmerston wished the question of reform to be treated not by his own friends.

Lord Derby did make an effort in 1859. This is the next connection of Lord Derby and his party with the question of reform. He had to deal with that question. It was his opinion, after the most deliberate thought, and after the most painful investigation on the subject, that with regard to the borough franchise, any degradation of the borough franchise from £10 to £8, or £7, or £6, or so on, would be utterly unsatisfactory, that it would lead to no settlement, and that you could arrive at no settlement unless you came to some household suffrage without the condition of rental value. He was not prepared to recommend that; he did not believe the country would have supported him in such a course, and therefore he endeavoured to carry out the policy which he recommended as to facilitating the admission of the working classes into the constitution by a variety of franchises. I shall not go into them now. The lodger franchise was one of them; then treated, of course, with contempt, but now, I understand, without doubt the palladium of our liberties. Well, now, these are the relations of Lord Derby to reform. He had from the beginning laid it down as his view of the case that no bill which did not revive the relation of the working classes with the Constitution of the country, and at the same time did not do justice to the population in the counties that were so feebly represented, would be satisfactory. In 1859 you know what occurred. We were expelled from power by a resolution of Lord John Russell that no settlement of the question of parliamentary reform would be satisfactory which did not involve the lowering of the borough franchise. We resisted that. We believed that it was a policy which ought not to be sanctioned by the House of Commons unless it was definitely brought forward, and feeling confident that there was no mere degradation of the borough franchise that could bring any satisfactory settlement, we recommended her Majesty to dissolve Parliament upon that issue. We appealed to the country. The country did not give us a

majority; and therefore both Parliament and the country were henceforth pledged to a lowering of the franchise in boroughs. Well, now, what happened in the memorable seven years which elapsed from 1859 to 1866, when Lord Derby was again called to power, and when he did me the honour again to ask me to attempt to lead the House of Commons? Now, observe, my Lords and Gentlemen, that from the year 1860, when Lord Palmerston, in consequence of the pledge into which he had been entrapped by the conduct of Lord John Russell—because Lord Palmerston, in consequence of his engagement to Lord Derby, was entirely opposed to the motion of Lord John Russell, and it was with great difficulty that in 1859 he agreed to support it—see, I say, what has occurred in Parliament on the subject of reform in these seven years. They commenced with the measure of Lord Palmerston in 1860. That failed. They concluded with the measure of Lord John Russell in 1866, which also failed; and in the interval there were all these separate motions of Mr Locke King and of Mr Baines of which we have heard. Therefore, during these years—from 1860 to 1866—the question of Parliamentary reform was constantly before the public mind and the examination of Parliament. During that period of seven years, with the advice—I may say under the instruction of my colleagues in public life, after constant communication with them—during these seven years, I endeavoured continuously to lay down the principles upon which, in our opinion, a measure of Parliamentary reform ought to be founded. Now, mark this—because these are things which you may not have heard of in another speech which was made in this city of Edinburgh. We had to prepare the mind of the country—to educate, if it be not arrogant to use such a phrase—to educate our party on this subject of reform. It is a large party, and its attention can only be obtained to the consideration of a great question by the pressure which is secured by frequent discussion. Now, what were the points which, not only with the concurrence of Lord Derby and my colleagues, some of whom are in this room—what were the points that, during the course of these seven years, I tried to impress upon the conscience and conviction of the country? They were these. First of all, and by far the most important, that a measure of Parliamentary reform, whenever it was adopted, should be a complete and comprehensive one; that all the branches of the subject should be dealt with; that we would not be seduced, as was the habit of the Radical party after the failure of Lord Palmerston's comprehensive measure in 1860, into dealing with the question in detail. And for this simple reason, that if you



deal with it in detail you may indeed establish a democratic constitution. Take Mr Baines's question of the reduction of the borough franchise, which we have been accused of inconsistency in having opposed. Had Mr Baines carried a very large reduction in the borough franchise without any reference to other portions of the subject, what would have happened? You would have had the next week, without any effective opposition—for it was a part of the subject on which the opinion of the House of Commons was matured—a great reduction in the county franchise. Well, when you had got these two things they would have rested, and in due time there would have been a dissolution of Parliament. And the county members would have been returned by the borough population that dwelt without the parliamentary boundaries of the Act of 1832. Well, that was the first great point which it was my duty always to impress upon Parliament; that we could listen to no measure that was not complete. We contended that all the portions of Parliamentary reform should be treated together, because we knew that in treating them all together depended that political equilibrium which has hitherto prevailed in this country. That was the first condition. What was the second? During these seven years I had to vindicate the principles upon which disfranchisement and enfranchisement should take place. I said for the party with which I acted, We cannot sanction any proposal for grouping boroughs; we contend that the representation of no place shall be entirely abrogated, and that if you want to increase representation, you must look to a certain class of boroughs, and appeal to their patriotism—which appeal will no doubt be successful if recommended by a Ministry—to spare you one of their members. These were the principles upon which for seven years we insisted that disfranchisement and enfranchisement should take place. What was the third condition? I said no settlement of this question of Parliamentary reform can be satisfactory unless you have a real and *bona fide* boundary commission—not a boundary commission that merely settles the boundaries of new boroughs, but that examines the boundaries of all existing Parliamentary boroughs, and takes care that people who are *bona fide* borough occupiers shall not under your sweeping measures of reform become suddenly county electors, and so change the whole character of the constituencies. What was the fourth point during these seven weary but not unprofitable years, I trust, that we insisted on on the part of our friends? The fourth point was this—that justice should at last be done to the majority of the English nation who live in counties, and that was to be done, not merely by giving representation to the towns that had sprung into importance

since Lord Grey's Act in 1832—not merely by the issue of a boundary commission of the effective character I have sketched, but by adding a considerable number directly to their representatives. Now, what was the fifth point that we insisted upon, and which we supported by our vote; and through which vote, though at the time we had no anticipation of it, we became the responsible Ministers of the Crown? We insisted that the borough franchise should be established upon the principle of rating. Now, these are the five points that during seven weary and toilsome years I have, with the entire concurrence of those who share your entire confidence, endeavoured in the House of Commons to impress upon the conscience and the conviction of Parliament. Now, my Lords and Gentlemen, what happened? There was a change of Government. Lord Derby came into power. Lord Derby had to consider the state of the country, and he resolved that in his opinion it was necessary to bring in a Reform Bill. We brought in a Reform Bill; we passed a Reform Bill; and now we ask you to consider, were the five points that during these seven years, on the part of Lord Derby, I impressed upon Parliament and the country, were they obtained or not? Our Reform Bill was a complete and comprehensive measure. We did vindicate the principles upon which enfranchisement and disfranchisement should take place; we did not abolish entirely the representation of any borough; we did successfully appeal to a certain class of boroughs to spare their surplusage of representation to supply the wants of the Constitution. We did do justice to the counties, by adding greatly to their direct representation and enfranchising the towns that had grown into importance since 1832. We did issue a Boundary Commission, that has been and is now examining the Parliamentary boundaries in every part of the kingdom. And, fifth and lastly, we did establish a suffrage for the boroughs founded on the principle of rating; and then I am told, when measures recommended to the country during seven years have been so triumphantly carried into effect, that we have done nothing, that it is our opponents who have suggested the Bill. I can only say this, that if you had seen the countenance of the gentleman who recently made a speech in this city when we did carry that Bill, you would not have read in those lineaments that triumph of the Liberal party after a toil of seventy years of which we have heard so much. I must say I never saw such a command over the exultation peculiar to man when he succeeds in an object dear to his heart and his friends.

I hope that I have stated fairly the question. It may be

said, and it will be said—"What you say is very true; nobody can deny you carried your five points; but your fifth point, which you have adroitly expressed for your case, involves all your treason. True it is, you have established the franchise of boroughs on the principle of rating; but you have established a Democratic Government in England, because you have established household suffrage, and you have gone much further than the measures which you previously opposed." Well, now let us see if there is anything in that. Now, my Lords and Gentlemen, I am not at all prepared to admit that household suffrage, with the constitutional conditions upon which we have established it—namely, residence and rating—conditions which, I believe, recommend themselves to the sense of propriety and justice of this United Kingdom. I say I am not prepared to admit that if we had established a household suffrage under such conditions in England, we should have established a Democratic Government. But, my Lords and Gentlemen, it is unnecessary to enter into that consideration, because we have not established household suffrage in England. There are, I think I may say, probably four million houses in England. Under our ancient laws, and under the Act of Lord Grey, about a million of those householders possess the franchise. Under the new Act of 1867, something more than 500,000 will be added to that million. Well, then, I want to know if there are four million householders, and a million and a half in round numbers have the suffrage, how can household suffrage be said to be established in England? You may question my estimates—I do not give them as my own. I am perfectly prepared to offer on such a subject estimates which ought to command the confidence of the country and Parliament; because they would be drawn up by expert men in public office, masters of all the details and minutiae of the question; and who, so far as politics are concerned—if they have any—would be influenced by their sympathies for the Liberal party who appointed them all to the offices which they hold. But it is not necessary for me on this occasion to appeal to them. You have had an estimate on the subject offered you within these very few days. I daresay many gentlemen present may have read it. It is by a member of Parliament who is a man of advanced opinions—extreme opinions—who, notwithstanding that, is a just as he is an able man—I believe, one of the most impartial and intelligent members of the House of Commons—who is a valuable member of that society, and than whom no man is more acquainted with the working classes, with their habits, with the accidents which would affect their electoral privileges, and who may be consi-



dered as high an authority on the subject as any living man, and that is the member for Oldham, Mr Hibbert. Mr Hibbert has recently met his constituents, and addressed them on the subject on which, with your indulgence, I am speaking at too great length at the present moment. Mr Hibbert supported the Government Bill. He approves and praises the Government Bill. He is not one of those men who praise the Government Bill, and say they want something more. He says—"If something more will come, I will be equally grateful for it; but this is a good bill. I am grateful for it. I do not want to exaggerate or depreciate what my friends will obtain by this increase of the suffrage, but I am perfectly content with it." Now this is a man of extreme opinions—looked upon with feelings of confidence—even of admiration—by those who work under him, an authority in those densely-peopled districts of which you have heard so much. Well, he says, "I have analysed the whole matter, and it is my opinion that the addition to the suffrage by the new Act will be about 520,000, of which something under two-fifths will be county electors, and that 355,000 or 360,000 will be borough electors." Well, that is the opinion of Mr Hibbert. He entirely confirms the knowledge the Government is in possession of, and on which the Government acted. Well, but is this a Democratic measure? Are we to be frightened at such a result as this? Are we really to believe that with a constituency of a million and a half—one million of whom we know of our own knowledge for a considerable space of time have exercised that suffrage according to the traditions of the country, and are now assisted in the fulfilment of that public duty by some half-million more equally influenced by the traditions of the country—are we to believe that this is establishing a Democratic Government in England? If that can be maintained, even by an ex-Lord Advocate, I should look upon it as one of the most preposterous conclusions. But I say more than this. I say Lord Derby could not have fixed upon any other solution of the question of the borough franchise than the one that he did. Remember that every degradation of the franchise—I use the term first—I don't shrink from it, it is correct language—I say that whatever degradation of value you make, whether it be £8, or £7, or £6, or £5, you are equally far from a principle and a settlement. Why, what was the reason all these Reform Bills failed? How is it—a thing utterly unknown in the history of this country—how is it that five Prime Ministers consecutively failed upon a question? Look to the history of the country. Those who live rapidly, in a rapid age, don't stop to think. But think of five Prime Ministers—the wisest men in the country—

the prime and chief men in the country, representing all the great parties, failing consecutively in settling a question. There must be some cause why they failed. The cause was this. Every independent man in the House of Commons, Tory and Radical alike, felt there was no settlement in any of these schemes because there was no principle in them. When you try to settle any great question, there are two considerations which statesmen ought not to forget. And, first of all, let your plan be founded upon some principle. But that is not enough. Let it also be a principle that is in harmony with the manners and customs of the people you are attempting to legislate for. Now, I say, when you come to this question of the suffrage for boroughs, there is a principle in saying a man shall have a vote who has, by his residence and his contribution to local taxation, proved that he is interested in the welfare of his community. That man is a man whom you may trust in preference to a migratory pauper. That is a principle, and then, if you can apply that principle in harmony with the manners and customs of your country, then I say that you have a chance of a solution—a happy solution—of a great question. When you find it was an old custom of the country that the householder should possess this suffrage—that the man who, by his residence and his rate, proved he was one who on an average might fairly be looked upon as a responsible and trustworthy individual, you had your principle, and you had your traditional practice to consecrate your principle. A rating and residential borough franchise was not new even in modern times. It had been tried in the Municipal Act, and for many years with great success. Men were not elected under it hostile to the institutions of the country; excellent measures of public improvement were passed. True it is, after many years' trial, the elections under the Municipal Act have become in many instances corrupt and unsatisfactory. But the Committee of the House of Lords that has investigated the subject, in their Report drawn up by Lord Grey, attribute all these evil consequences to an alteration in the law which allows men now to vote without the condition of personal payment of rates. Well, then, I say that in these circumstances the measure which we have carried was the only measure which could have been passed. And that seems now to be universally acknowledged even by those who complain that we have been successful.

But then it is said that we have not treated our friends well—that we may have been wise and statesmanlike—but that we have betrayed our friends. It is said that we induced our friends to support this Bill on the ground that we were going to introduce certain securities by which this franchise could be exer-



cised, not only with impunity, but with advantage to the State. Now, trusting to the candour of the audience I am addressing, I think it is worth while pausing a moment to see whether there is the slightest foundation for that charge. I say there is none. When Lord Derby made up his mind to deal with Parliamentary reform, he had to deal with it definitely, because the failure of another Reform Bill would have been a disadvantage to Lord Derby, but not merely a source of great danger to the country. He had to look at the position in which he was placed, a Minister about to deal with a question which had baffled all these other Ministers, and he in a minority—for remember that every Minister who had attempted before to reform Parliament had been in a majority. Well, then, Lord Derby, after deep consideration, was of opinion that, in the spirit of the constitution, and in perfect consonance and harmony with all Parliamentary practice when such difficulties existed, when it was a notorious and acknowledged fact that no Minister and no party could settle a question which the Queen from her throne five times had said was necessary to be settled, there was a mode by which we could extricate ourselves from our difficulties, and facilitate a settlement, and that was to proceed by resolution. I believe a wiser and more constitutional, and, I believe, a more practical decision had never been arrived at. But we were very weak when we met Parliament. We met a Parliament ready to devour us in a moment by an immense majority. I endeavoured to introduce this question of resolutions to the House of Commons. Well, our opponents at the commencement of the session being more powerful than they were at the end, induced the House to treat this plan of dealing by resolutions with utter contumely, and we were obliged to withdraw the resolutions. But what happened? The House of Commons, as time proceeded, and they saw they were dealing with men who were determined to do their duty to their Sovereign and their country, and, if possible, settle this question—the common sense of the House of Commons vindicated our original course, and though theoretically we did not propose the Reform Bill by resolutions, practically we did. Because, although whether proceeding by resolution or by bill, we had a general policy from which we would never deviate, there were a hundred questions upon which the opinion of the House of Commons might fairly under the circumstances decide the course of the Government. But, of course, when we were obliged to introduce a bill, these points appeared as clauses, and though if they had figured as resolutions the decision of the House might have been accepted by the Government with-

out imperilling their measure, which is the advantage of proceeding by resolution, because we were obliged to place them in our bill we are charged with having entirely given up all the conditions, what are called the securities, with which this measure was first recommended.

Now, let us look at this. I will try to state the case as strongly as I can against the Government. I won't take petty points which it might be very easy to make ridiculous, but I will take grave points. Well, there is the principle of plural voting. The Tory party would never have permitted the introduction of your bill if they had known you were going to give up the principle of plural voting. Well, the principle of plural voting was introduced into the resolutions; and if we had had a fair and good discussion on the principle of plural voting, which we had not, I think it might have been advantageous to the House of Commons and instructive to the country. But, gentlemen, the principle of plural voting is not a Tory principle. No Tory ever wrote in favour of plural voting. No Tory ever made a speech in favour of plural voting; but after Lord John Russell, by that fatal act of faction in 1859, pledged Parliament and the country to a reduction of the franchise, there was an immense alarm in the Liberal party on the possible consequences of such a course, and all the philosophers who belonged to the Liberal party, and I have reason to believe there are some in the city of Edinburgh, wrote books to show that they could only save the State by allowing men to have more votes than one. Well, there is no doubt the men who did this were philosophers—all very clever men—Mr Mill and his disciples—men of great brain, of great intelligence, many of them, and like him, masters of composition; and no doubt they produced a certain effect on the public mind. Not that the great mass of the people had ever heard of such a thing, but these things affected the public mind among the more intelligent and influential classes, and therefore, in our resolutions, knowing very well that if a Tory could have more than one vote he would have no objection to it, although he never invented the system, we introduced the principle of plural voting in our bill, and we are denounced by great authorities because we introduced our measure with the recommendation of plural voting, and then gave up that great security in a moment.

Now, what are the facts of the case? When I introduced the bill, I referred to the circumstances I have just noticed, and said we had proposed there should be in certain circumstances a dual vote. I did not particularly insist on it, but wished to have the opinion of the House upon it. What happened

next night? A county member, a highly Conservative member, I am sorry to say, although he is a very old friend of mine, not now present, for he was a Scotch member, the member for Inverness, gave notice of a motion denouncing plural voting under any forms and circumstances. That was the first welcome of the principle of plural voting. Mr Henley, a remarkable man, to whom the Chairman has referred—probably his like has not been seen in the House of Commons since the Parliaments of Walpole, and the days of Mr Shippen—wrote a letter to the Government, and made a speech in the House of Commons, in which he denounced plural voting; and all, and they are many, who are influenced by Mr Henley would have acted with him. All that I know is, that I fixed one fortnight before the second reading of the Bill, and before a week had elapsed, those who had the best knowledge of our party—the gentlemen who assist me by their acuteness and universal acquaintance with the members—informed me they did not believe there were ten men in the Tory party who would vote in favour of plural voting; Mr Gladstone one week after announcing his implacable hostility to plural voting—of course, it was universally said that I immediately truckled to Mr Gladstone. The fact is, the party would not stand plural voting. They did not sympathise with the Liberal philosophers, and I was obliged to give it up. Would you not have done so in the same circumstances?

The next thing is the condition of residence, and the amount of its duration. That was a fair question for a resolution. The condition of residence under the municipal franchise is about three years. A great many of what are called the working-classes communicated with us through a variety of bodies they have, and they all said they were perfectly anxious and willing to take a rating household suffrage with the municipal period of three years' residence, and a great many gentlemen of our party were in favour of two years. Well, we thought, under these circumstances, that as we could not proceed by resolution, and obtain the opinion of the House, we would feel our way; and we thought two years was a very fair proposal to try the feeling of the House. The House was in favour of one year. I thought two years was a reasonable term, and I divided the House upon it. Many Tory members voted against me; a greater number kept away, and all that remained said they only voted for me out of respect to their leader. Now that is the encouragement I received in supporting what are called securities, of which we have heard so much.

Well, then, there was a third security—for I won't go through

the famous ten ; some of them are too absurd, and I only go through the great ones—the reduction of the county franchise. We proposed a £15 rating franchise. Mr Locke King proposed one of £10. I went down to the House of Commons prepared to support the proposition of the Government. The county members of both sides had a meeting that afternoon, and they came to a resolution. They decided that a £12 rating franchise was in their opinion perfectly satisfactory, and when I got to my seat in the House that resolution was put in my hands. What was I to do? Of course I thought myself fortunate in preventing Mr Locke King from carrying his £10, and making the arrangement which my own party desired.

And so it is on all the points of importance. I have already trespassed too long on your attention, but there is one other point which I must notice. I speak of an animal not known in Scotland, and, thank God, no longer known in England—the compound householder. The compound householder is a being who wants a vote without paying rates. Well, that we opposed. Nothing in the world would induce us to consent to any man having a vote who did not personally pay his rates, and I believe that is a sound principle. Of course we knew very well it was a difficult thing to deal with, because no doubt there were many men who were compound householders in spite of themselves, and there was an apparent hardship. But we were firm upon that point, and would have withdrawn the bill if that had been insisted on. If we had attempted to do away with the compound householder when Parliament first met, we should have had all the vestries of London agitating the country ; and Mr Gladstone himself, quite contemplating our difficulties, had announced that the laws under which compound householding existed were the result of the civilisation of the age. But as the thing went on, we got a little stronger, and matters were more understood ; and months afterwards the Liberal party themselves proposed to do away with the great result of civilisation. What was our obvious course? We had insisted that no man should vote who did not pay rates. We had sympathised with the compound householder by having prepared clauses by which his vote might be facilitated, and if he chose to come forward, and commit suicide, and say, “ I will no longer be a compound householder, but I will give up these privileges and pay rates,” what was our duty? It would have been most inconsistent in us to resist such a proposal. I say that the compound householder bowing down, and giving up his peculiar position, and saying, “ In order to exercise the suffrage I will pay the rate,” was the very triumph of the principle of our Bill. So



there was an end of the compound householder, but the benefit did not rest there. That decision will restore the municipal elections to their primitive order and purity, for it was the admission of the compound householder to the suffrage which disordered and degraded our corporation elections.

Now, my Lords and Gentlemen, you have, by what I have told you, some notion of what a speech in detail is in the House of Commons. There must be a commendable zeal to induce you to listen with so much attention to a narrative of this description; but yet, is it not expedient that statements of this kind should be made by those who, however unworthily, occupy great positions, upon this question especially, when week after week and month after month, such enormous nonsense has been circulated through the country? And therefore I think, as you have been so kind to me as to ask me to be your guest, and offer me your congratulations and your encouragements for the little that I have done, my observations are not altogether misplaced. I think I have shown to you—if you will allow me briefly to summarise what I have said—that we were perfectly justified as a party to deal with this question. I think I have shown to you that it ought to have been dealt with. I venture to say that I think I have shown to you, and proved to you, that we have dealt with it in the proper manner. I think I have shown to you that the story that we have democratised the country by establishing household suffrage is a fable. I think I have shown you that the assertion that we have misled and betrayed our friends by giving up all the securities which we talked of, is an idle fabrication, and that, from the mistake of the House of Commons—which every man in the House of Commons now feels—of preventing us proceeding by resolution, we were obliged to insert in our Bill all those points which afterwards we relinquished, but that we have carried in our Bill all the principles upon which we ever insisted.

But, if I am right in this last assertion, pardon some feeling on my part, when I remember that it is in consequence of our unprincipled withdrawal of those securities, and our treachery to our friends, who insisted upon being betrayed—I say, pardon my feelings, when I understand that it is in consequence of my conduct in that respect that I miss to-day the presence of one of my oldest and most valued friends. I should have liked to have been welcomed by his cordial heart, and by that ripe scholarship which no one appreciates more than myself. He has commemorated the withdrawal of his confidence in a letter which, strange to say, has not a quotation. No one would have furnished a happier one. I can picture him to myself at this

moment in the castellated shades of Thurso, with the 'Edinburgh Review' on one side, and on the other, 'The Conservative Surrender.' He who has written the summary of the session in the 'Edinburgh' is not mounted on the fiery barb of Francis Jeffrey; it is rather on a prancing hearse-horse that he consummates the entombment of Whig principles. 'The Conservative Surrender,' to borrow an expression from the fascinating volumes upon art of my friend the Chairman, is what you would call a Replica. We find the same subject treated in speeches, in articles, in reviews, and sometimes in manifestoes. The colouring is not without charm, but the drawing is inaccurate, the perspective is false, the subject monotonous. Far be it from me to discover a man by his style. The wittiest of poets has commemorated for ever the character who knows you under those circumstances. If, therefore, I make an observation on 'The Conservative Surrender,' it is founded entirely upon abstract principles. I would say that article was written by a very clever man, who has made a very great mistake. It is a combination which, it is said, produces strange effects on the temper, and sometimes even on the intellect. The leaders of the Conservative party are traitors; the Conservative party are fools; they do not know that they have been abused; they have not recognised that their confidence has been betrayed and outraged. I see many gentlemen here who, I have no doubt, have been inspectors like myself, as magistrates, of peculiar asylums. You meet there some cases which I have always thought at the same time the most absurd and the most distressing—it is when the inmate believes that all the world is mad, and that he himself alone is sane. But, to pass from such gloomy images—really, as to these 'Edinburgh' and 'Quarterly Reviews,' no one admires them more than myself, but I admire them as I do first-rate posting-houses which, in old days, for half a century or so, to use a Manchester phrase, carried on a roaring trade. Then there comes some revolution of progress, which no person could ever have contemplated. They find things are altered; they do not understand them; and instead of the intense competition and mutual vindictiveness which before distinguished them, they suddenly agree—Boots of the Blue Boar and the chambermaid of the Red Lion embrace, and they are quite of accord in denouncing the infamy of railroads.

Now, it occurs to me, as it may have occurred to you—and it will be my only excuse for making another observation—that I hitherto have been speaking upon the English Reform Bill; but in speaking upon the English Reform Bill, you must remember as my excuse that I at least have been speaking upon an Act

that has been passed; and secondly, as I have already declared, in a place even more public than this, that I thought, adapted to such changes as the laws of the two countries required, the same principles ought to be adopted in the Scottish as in the English Reform Bill. Now, my Lords and Gentlemen, with regard to the Scottish Reform Bill, there are two points of great importance. I should, under any circumstances and at any time, at a meeting like this, avoid unnecessary detail; but having unfortunately trespassed upon you so long, it is necessary that I should curtail what little I have to say; but with regard to the Scottish Reform Bill there are two important points—the one is the extension of the franchise, the other is the increase of the representation. All other clauses in the Scottish Reform Bill are really matters of detail; but, with regard to these two points I will, on the first, repeat what I have intimated here, and stated in other places, that it is our intention to propose to extend to Scotland that ample and considerable increase of the franchise which we have established in England. But the next point is one of much difficulty and delicacy, and I think it requires your very earnest consideration, and that is, the increase of the representation of Scotland. Now, gentlemen, I have expressed my opinion with a due consideration of the increase of the population, and the wealth, the tax-paying power, and other circumstances, the representation of Scotland ought to be increased; but when you come to the mode by which you can increase it, you will find great difficulties; and I say at once, that unless the Scotch members can forget for a moment all petty party feelings, and will support the Government, whatever that Government may be, which is prepared to increase the representation of Scotland, no increase of the representation of Scotland can possibly occur. Now, my opinion is, after having given the most deliberate consideration to the subject, that you cannot increase the representation of Scotland unless you increase the number of the members of the House of Commons. I do not express that as a mere abstract opinion formed by reflection upon certain circumstances. I say that as one who is and has been leader of the House of Commons, and knows something of the character and disposition of the men who are members of the House of Commons; and I am perfectly certain—as certain as that I am speaking now to you who are here present—that there is no other mode by which the representation of Scotland can be increased. You will have fifty other modes brought before you, and some of them proposed, I am sorry to say, by members for Scotland. Nothing more easy than to point to a class of English boroughs for example, with a small

population, and contrast their circumstances socially, commercially, and politically with those of some flourishing places in Scotland, and frame an argument for their disfranchisement and the enfranchisement of the places in Scotland; but the people of England, permit me to say, know that they are represented at present by 500 members, and that their members have already been diminished in order to increase the representation of Scotland. Various as the opinions of the people of England may be as to the distribution of seats and the disposition of power, they do not believe but what they can amply and completely dispose, for their own uses, of those 500 members; and they will never let the people of Scotland have one. And permit me to say that I cannot blame them. Therefore, if any members for Scotland join in any motion to disfranchise boroughs in England with the idea that they are obtaining them for grouped boroughs, or single boroughs, or divided counties in Scotland, they will find that in the last scene of the pantomime, all changes, and the members from the disfranchised English boroughs will be apportioned from the small English borough to the large English city. Therefore, it will be necessary for the people of Scotland next year to make up their minds upon this subject. So far as the Government are concerned, they will at the earliest opportunity, in the next session in February, bring forward their Scotch Reform Bill. They will propose a considerable increase of Scotch members which must be furnished by increasing the number of members of the House of Commons, and they will stand by that proposition if the Scotch members support them. I do not mean to say that there is no inconvenience in altering the number of the members of the House of Commons. I am perfectly alive to the inconvenience that may accrue from that course, but the number of the members of the House of Commons has been changed before this; and the question is not whether you are to increase the number of the members of the House of Commons, but whether you are to increase the number of the members of the House of Commons for an adequate and proper purpose. It is said that if you increase the number of members of the House of Commons, every petty place that rises like a fungus in the night and gets a population, God knows how, where they come from, or where they go to, for they often disappear, will immediately clatter at the door of the House of Commons, and ask to be admitted. Well, my answer to that is, the good sense of the House of Commons, which is the great quality upon which we ought always to trust, will immediately put an end to such an appeal. But when it comes to the question whether an intelligent nation



that joined us, as I said before, on equal terms, should receive, from its altered circumstances, increased representation, I believe the good sense of the House of Commons will fairly consider that question, and they will say—"There is no cabalistical charm in the number of 658." Who says there is? There is no cabalistical charm in the number of 658; and it is only to the good sense of the country that you can trust to prevent an increase of the House of Commons for any unworthy and inadequate purpose. Well, that is the course of her Majesty's Government, which they will pursue with regard to the questions of the Scotch Reform Bill. They will propose a considerable increase of Scotch members; but if the Scotch members do not support them, the Scotch members must take the consequences.

My Lords and Gentlemen, I should like to stop, because I have already passed beyond the limits which your hospitality justifies. I should just like to make one or two more remarks. I should be sorry that any here present should suppose that I was deficient in respect to them, and that I was not anxious, meeting them here, frankly to communicate on public affairs, having received an invitation under circumstances so flattering to any individual, and which by me is very deeply felt. There is another subject which greatly interests this country—and I try to confine myself to those subjects which immediately interest yourselves—that is, Education. It is a subject which at the present moment is in everybody's mouth, I think for a very inadequate cause; and I think that the cant of announcing, that because half a million of worthy Englishmen—two-fifths of whom must be rated at, I believe, £12 a-year—are to be admitted to the suffrage, is a cause why we should suddenly be educating the whole people of the country, or assuming that they are perfectly ignorant, is rather absurd. But with regard to the question of education—not with reference to the petty party motives to which I have referred, but with regard to the question of education generally, ever since I have been in public life I have done everything I possibly could to promote the cause of the education of the people generally. I have done so because I have always felt that with the limited population of this United Kingdom, compared with the great imperial position which it occupies with reference to other nations, it is not only our duty, but it is an absolute necessity, that we should study to make every man the most effective being that education can possibly constitute him. In the old wars there used to be a story that one Englishman could beat three members of some other nation; but I think if we want to maintain our power, we ought to make one Englishman equal really in the business of

life to three other men that any other nation can furnish. I do not see how otherwise, with our limited population, we can fulfil the great destiny that I believe waits us, and the great position we occupy. Therefore, so far as I am concerned, whether it be a far greater advanced system of primary education—whether it be that system of competitive examination which I have ever supported, though I am not unconscious of some pedantry with which it is accompanied, or whatever may be the circumstances, I shall ever be its supporter. If I had wanted an instance at any time to convince me of the advantage of national education, I should have always referred to that country of which I am now the guest. It has been my lot, as it has possibly been the lot of the great majority of those present, to have found myself in many distant lands, but I have never been in any one without finding a Scotchman, and I never found a Scotchman who was not at the head of the poll—always prosperous, always thriving, often the confidential adviser of persons of the highest position, even of the rulers of States: and although I myself am inclined to attribute much to organisation and to race, I am bound to say that I never heard a Scotchman yet, even if he was the confidential adviser of a Pasha, who did not tell me he owed his rise to his parish school. Well, under these circumstances you will not suppose for a moment that I at all depreciate the system of your national education; but I think there is no person who has candidly and completely examined its details but must acknowledge that though the principles on which it is founded are admirable, the application of these principles is not sufficiently complete and extensive. I can only say that since the report of the Commissioners on the subject of your schools was made, it has been considered by the Government, and I hope that in this session we shall bring forward a measure of national education, which will succeed in passing the Legislature; and if we can give you a good Reform Bill and a good Education Bill, I think you will remember the last year of the old Parliament with feelings of softness and regard.

Gentlemen, may I be allowed to say, in reference to the subject of education generally, not merely with reference to Scotland, because it now naturally occupies the attention of the public. I think the issue that has been raised is in a certain sense a false issue; but as it touches very great principles and affects the character of the nation, I would say myself I do not believe that in this United Kingdom any monotonous form of education, founded on a compulsory principle of forcing every part of the country to adopt the same system, will be successful.

I am not prepared at this moment to agree that the same system ought to be extended to every part of her Majesty's dominions, and to admit that the British nation generally is an uneducated one. So far as our primary education is concerned, there is no doubt that the multiplicity of our occupations and the value of labour has prevented that complete education, in a primary sense, which is to be desired. But if you look even to our primary education as compared with the primary education of other countries for the last thirty years, though it may not reach, in some respects, the alleged points which other nations have accomplished, still, as a whole, during these thirty years the advance of England has been greatest. But I deny that the education of the people of England entirely depends—I am talking now of the general population—on our system of primary education. I say that the technical education of the English artizan—especially since what we may describe as the Albertine movement took place—since Prince Albert first laid down those principles and doctrines which have been carried into felicitous effect—the technical education of the English artizan has been immensely improved. But if you come to mere secular education, there is an influence prevalent in England which exists in no other country, and which forms in a very great degree the character and conduct of the English people, and that is the influence of a free press. That influence is never considered. The press of this country, conducted by whatever party, but, on the whole, conducted with great knowledge, with great intelligence, and with a high moral feeling, imparts a secular education to the people of this country, which none of the boasted countries which are brought forward as models, and which we are called upon to make great efforts to equal, can for a moment compete with. And, gentlemen, I care not what may be the opinions and feelings of those who conduct the press in this country. It is to me immaterial whether the persons who conduct it are animated by a high moral feeling or not; but it is quite clear they cannot successfully direct their labours to any great class in this country unless they give that class credit for that high moral feeling. And, therefore, without indulging in any cant on the subject, I say the condition of our press, which for knowledge, general intelligence, information, and moral feeling, cannot be easily excelled, is a proof of the sound condition of the country in a very extensive class, and of a process of secular education highly profitable which is at present going on.

Gentlemen, I will detain you no longer, for I daresay few of you have ever listened to a longer speech, and perhaps you will hesitate before you issue such an invitation again. I cannot



deny that the great measure which has been passed this year will give in some degree a new character to the constitution, and introduce some new powers and influences into its play and action. Indeed, to accomplish these ends was the object of those who brought it forward. I am told, at least I hear every day, that in consequence of the change which has been effected, one must expect great questions to arise. Well, great questions no doubt will arise, and, Gentlemen, I shall be very sorry if great questions should not arise. Great questions are a proof that a country is progressing. If there were no great questions, it would only show that we were in a stagnant state. But I say, my Lords and Gentlemen, contrast the present state of affairs when this Reform Bill of 1867 has been passed, with what my noble friend near me, his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, remembers when the Reform Bill for 1832 was passed, what a different feeling there was in the country! No one can believe now that the wise and experienced men of those days were afraid of the Reform Bill. It was not the Reform Bill that was brought forward by Lord Grey, and the eminent statesmen who supported him, that produced that alarm. It was the way in which the Reform Bill was passed; it was the bludgeons and brickbats; it was Nottingham Castle in flames; it was cities like Bristol nearly sacked. But contrast that state of affairs, and the consequences of it, with the state of affairs which we are now experiencing. We have had our riot—"A little riot, just to show we are freemen." We have had, as in 1832, opinions of revolutionary violence expressed, but they were expressed in 1832 by men of mark, by men who influenced opinion. By whom are these violent opinions expressed now? By the nincompoops of politics—by persons more absurd than Hudibras. Now, if you consider the different positions of the country at those two periods, it is very remarkable. You passed a Reform Bill then, and everybody was frightened. They were so frightened that they collected together and believed that the only security against further danger was associating together to prevent further change. Now, we all feel what an error that was. It is as fallacious a principle in politics as in science to suppose that you can establish a party upon resistance to change, and for this reason, that change is inevitable. In a progressive country change is constant; and the great question is, not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether that change should be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws, and the traditions of a people, or whether it should be carried out in deference to abstract principles, and arbitrary and general doctrines. The one is a national system; the other,

to give it an epithet, a noble epithet—which, perhaps, it may deserve—is a philosophic system. Both have great advantages: the national party is supported by the fervour of patriotism; the philosophical party has a singular exemption from the force of prejudice. The national party, representing sometimes the prejudices of a nation, may retard its advancement, but will never weaken the national character: the philosophic party, though it may occasionally improve, by its advanced views, the condition of a country, often precipitates, and sometimes perverts, progress, and thus may occasion revolutions and destroy States.

Now, my Lords and Gentlemen, I have always considered that the Tory party was the national party of England. It is not formed of a combination of oligarchs and philosophers who practise on the sectarian prejudices of a portion of the people. It is formed of all classes, from the highest to the most homely, and it upholds a series of institutions that are in theory, and ought to be in practice, an embodiment of the national requirements and the security of the national rights. Whenever the Tory party degenerates into an oligarchy, it becomes unpopular; whenever the national institutions do not fulfil their original intention, the Tory party becomes odious; but when the people are led by their natural leaders, and when, by their united influence, the national institutions fulfil their original intention, the Tory party is triumphant: and then, under Providence, will secure the prosperity and the power of the country.

My Lords and Gentlemen, the times in which we happen to meet are no doubt serious. At this moment events may be occurring which may influence the destiny of Europe, and affect the position of this country, though, for my own part, I should not be doing my duty if I did not express my conviction that it is not only the interest but the intention of the great Powers of Europe not only to favour, but to favour permanently, the cause of peace. But, no doubt, whatever Ministry may have to regulate the fortunes of this country, whatever may be their abilities, whatever may be the favouring circumstances they can command, they are nothing without the confidence of the great body of the nation, and without the encouragement which assemblies like this one must give to them. For myself, I assure you, Gentlemen, encouraged as I have been to-day by the cordial kindness with which you have greeted me—a thing to be remembered—which I have not merited—which I do not accept as a reward, but which I do accept as encouragement. I am the last man who would for a moment affect to depreciate the difficulties which a British Minister has now to meet, or would attempt for a moment to exaggerate the qualities which

I, or even my colleagues better than myself, possess to encounter them. Indeed, when I remember the elements and interests of these British Isles, so vast, so various, and so complicated; when I even call to recollection the difference of race which, however blended, leaves significant characteristics; when I recollect that the great majority of the population of the United Kingdom rise every day and depend for their subsistence—their daily subsistence—on their daily labour; when I recollect the delicate marvel of our credit—more wonderful, in my opinion, than our accumulated capital—the constant collision between those ancient institutions that give permanence to the State, and the requirements of the new populations that arise, and which they do not completely or adequately meet—when I remember that it is upon the common sense, the prudence, and the courage of the community thus circumstanced that depends the fate of uncounted millions in Asian provinces, and that around the globe there is a circle of domestic settlements that watch us for example and inspiration. When I know that not a sun rises upon a British Minister that does not bring him care, and often inexpressible anxiety—some unexpected war, a disturbed or discontented colony, a pestilence, a famine, a mutiny, a collapse of credit, a declining trade, a decaying revenue, perhaps some insensate and fantastic conspiracy, I declare I often wonder where is the strength of thought and the fund of feeling that are adequate to cope with such colossal circumstances. But when I withdraw from the pressure of individual interests and take a larger and deeper view of human affairs, I recognise that in this country, whatever may have been the tumult and the turmoil of now many generations, there have ever been three master influences that have at all times guided and controlled all other powers and passions. And these are Industry, Liberty, and Religion. So long as this sacred combination influences the destiny of this country it will not die. History will recognise its life, not record its decline and fall. It will say—This is a great and understanding people, and it is from such materials we make the magnificence of nations and establish the splendour of terrestrial thrones.

# SPEECH

IN ANSWER TO AN ADDRESS PRESENTED BY

THE WORKING MEN OF EDINBURGH,

IN THE MUSIC HALL, OCT. 30, 1867.

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GENTLEMEN, and my good friends, I thank you heartily for the kind manner in which you have received this Address, and the attempt I am now going to make to answer to the suggestions contained in it. I am the more grateful to you for the manner in which you have received me, because I alone am responsible for the indiscretion, if it be one, of appearing before you this evening and becoming your guest. I was told that it would be on my part a great mistake and grievous error; that I had been misled and misinformed as to the sentiments and opinions of the working classes of Edinburgh, and that it was on my part an act most rash and unconsidered; and coming to this city to receive, as I have received, one of the greatest compliments that any individual has yet had proffered to him, that I should go out of my way, and unnecessarily, to destroy the effect of a demonstration so distinguished, would be an act of folly unparalleled. I was told that I should be met to-night, not by the working classes of Edinburgh, but only by some working men in that city. My answer was that I knew of no corporate body that could arrogate to itself the right of representing all the working classes of Edinburgh, and that if I believed there was any considerable portion of my fellow-countrymen in a position of life more homely than those who welcomed me last night, who, on an occasion like the present, on a visit to a city of this importance by one who, however unworthily, is still a Minister of the Crown, desired to have an opportunity of communing



with me, I did think I would not be doing my duty to my Sovereign, to my country, and to my fellow-subjects, if I churlishly refused to them the communication which they desired.

Gentlemen, if I had considered my personal convenience I certainly should not have been present at this moment, and I am physically incapable of addressing you in the manner you deserve. But when I was appealed to in London upon this subject, and appealed to by men who I believed then, and I now know, rightfully represented the feelings and opinions of a considerable portion of the working classes of this city, I could not refuse to them, though I was then surrounded by all the state of a Minister—I could not refuse to receive these honest men who had travelled up to London, and unkindly say that I would not listen to their representations. I wish to make you fully acquainted with the feelings under which we meet to-night, that you should not suppose it, on my part, an act of arrogance in seeking this interview. On the contrary, I have only been influenced by a feeling which I am sure would be common in all men when I shrunk from doing an act which, if I had refused to come, would, in my mind, have been unkind and ungentlemanly.

Now, gentlemen, I must express to you my thanks for the Address which you have just read and offered to my acceptance. There is one portion of that Address which you will easily believe I entirely sympathise with. Probably there is no man living who more entirely agrees with you that it is an act upon which the country may generally be congratulated—that the Bill we introduced for the representation of the people in England has passed into a law. I am glad to find that so considerable an assembly, and one formed, I think no one now will deny, mainly of the working classes of this metropolis—I am glad to find that they so entirely approve of that measure; that they believe it was one conceived in a spirit adequate to the occasion, and calculated to lead to the settlement of a question which had too long agitated the commonwealth, and distracted and disturbed that application of the popular energies to other questions which, if carried into effect, would have tended to improve the condition and advance the fortunes of the people and the country. This is most gratifying to me, and I am sure will be to every member of her Majesty's Government. The personal allusions which you have made in that Address I accept as an indication of your kindness to me individually, but in a great degree, I must admit, they are undeserved. It is not to my individual exertions peculiarly that you are indebted for the passing of the Reform Act. I was supported by colleagues



who entirely concurred with me. I served under a Prime Minister who is the leading spirit of his Cabinet—between whom and myself there is perfect and entire sympathy—and who resolved upon this question from the first, that nothing should deter us if possible from bringing to a happy conclusion the settlement of a question upon which vitally depended the greatness of the empire and the happiness of her Majesty's subjects. But, Gentlemen, you are also indebted, not merely to the Ministry, but you are indebted to the high feeling of the existing House of Commons—to the party with which I am connected, who upon that occasion evinced a devotion and an energy rarely to be equalled in the history of the Constitution of our country. They gave no churlish support; they gave no limited devotion to their leaders; but, impelled by the conviction that the settlement of this question was one of vital necessity, they determined that it should be settled in a manner which should produce concord among all classes of her Majesty's subjects. Gentlemen, you have given me credit individually for the possession and exercise of some happy qualities in the carrying of this measure. If I have shown patience, it became my position. If I have listened to the suggestions of my opponents with deference, I only fulfilled the duty of a British Minister. But believe me that I am not entitled to those compliments which I sometimes receive upon my marvellous dexterity. I will explain to you to-night all the arts by which I contrived to achieve this great success. All the black arts imputed to me are simply these—that on all important questions I took my own party into confidence, and when I had to appeal to an independent Opposition, I remembered at all times that they were men of sense and gentlemen. And it was by these two means, and these only, that I succeeded at last, as the organ of a unanimous Government, in carrying a measure which I believe will add stability to the State and spirit to the community.

Gentlemen, our Chairman has referred to my career, somewhat longer now than I care to recollect. But whatever its length, and whatever its labours, believe me that I have a reward for them to-night in the reception which I have met from a meeting, not only so numerous as that which I now address, but influenced, as no one can deny, by feelings so cordial, so friendly, and, I hope, so just. Gentlemen, when I hear of this war among classes, I must say, taking, I hope, an impartial view of my public career, which has now lasted longer than the lives of many men that are now present—throwing my eye over a Parliamentary career alone that continuously has

prevailed for upwards of thirty years, I cannot find that I have ever taken any part hostile, or intentionally hostile, to the interests of the working classes, or that I have ever been connected with those who ought to be or who intended to be in antagonism with them. Now, gentlemen, during those thirty years there has been a great mass of legislation which has been carried in Parliament affecting the interests of the working classes—measures in which they were deeply interested themselves, which they promoted by their presence, and which they showed by their conduct were dear in every sense to the innermost sentiments of their hearts and hearths. I have remarked, in looking over that period, that during that time, I think, if I recollect correctly—of course, upon an occasion like the present I must speak with that indulgence which I am sure you will afford to one who has no blue-books to refer to, but I think there have been thirty-two Acts passed relative to the condition of the people, and especially of the working classes in this country, in which they took the deepest interest—laws affecting their wages, their education, their hours of toil, their means of self-improvement—laws the object of which was to elevate their condition and soften the asperities which are the inevitable consequence of probably any state of society that may exist. Now, Gentlemen, I can say this, it is some gratification to me, and I think it will be fairly admitted, it is some trial of the disposition and career of a public man, that of those thirty-two Acts passed during those thirty years, I have invariably supported every one. Gentlemen, allow me to tell you that though that legislation is now considered as the result of a philosophy the propriety and justice of which cannot be questioned, there was not one of those Acts that was not bitterly and ably opposed. I will not say now by whom they were opposed, or by what party they were opposed, because it is neither my wish, nor is it in any way necessary to a meeting like the present, that we dwell upon those circumstances. But this I will say, they were not opposed by the political party with which I am intimately connected. And only yesterday evening, when I dined with a very large body of your fellow-citizens, though not comparable in numbers with those I now address, I had the pleasure of meeting a gentleman who is my colleague, but who was present there as a proprietor and dweller in Scotland—not only my colleague, but my dearest friend, Lord John Manners—and he then recalled to my recollection that a quarter of a century ago and more, when neither of us thought that we should probably be advisers of the Crown, we were working together for the very objects which are dearest to the majority of those that I am now addressing, many

of which, mainly by his influence, much more than by my own, have been carried into active legislation, and all of which in their effects are now universally acknowledged to have elevated and improved the condition of the great mass of the population.

Well, Gentlemen, on this subject I may be perhaps permitted to remind you that the present session of Parliament has given, I think, some evidence that the feelings of her Majesty's Ministers are unchanged upon this subject, and that we have not forgotten that which is one of the first and principal duties of any Minister, which is to consider whether, by legislation, the condition of the great body of the people can be improved. Although our time has been engrossed by that great measure which, followed, as I hope it will be followed with regard to Scotland, by identical legislation, has greatly increased the popular privileges of the people of England—notwithstanding the engrossing nature of that great labour, which would have been an excuse for any neglect of any subject by any Ministry—I am glad to recollect that the present Government have carried two measures even in this session of Parliament of vital importance to the interests of the people. One is a measure with which you no doubt are well acquainted, which has extended the principles and the conditions of the Factory Act to all the trades of the United Kingdom. That was a measure of no mean importance, and which very considerably, and for the better, affects the condition of the people—and the other is that Act which limits the hours of labour up to eighteen years of age, and which, with reference to that provision, has established a system of compulsory education. Well, then, I think, Gentlemen, under these circumstances—remembering that this was a session of all others in which, if there were any insincerity in our feelings, we might easily have refrained from exerting ourselves on the subject—I think we may, with satisfaction and just pride, appeal to those two measures which have passed, and by the influence of the Government alone have passed, as some evidence that her Majesty's Ministers are mindful of what the Government of the Queen should never forget. But, gentlemen, when I say that I have from my earliest public life been of opinion that this assumed and affected antagonism between the interests of what are called the Conservative classes and the labouring classes is utterly unfounded. I say that if I had to adduce a further proof of that, I would appeal to a measure, also passed in the present session of Parliament, which I am bound to say, even at the expense of the reputation of the Government, is even more valuable than those two considerable measures to which I have referred, and that is the measure which Lord Elcho introduced and passed through Parliament,



which altered the state of the law as respects contracts between master and servant. In my opinion, a more beneficial law, and one which more sensibly improves the condition of the great body of the people, was never introduced and passed through Parliament; and I say that there is no language which can express, in my opinion, the debt of gratitude which the country owes to Lord Elcho for the untiring patience, the admirable ability, the courage, and the determination with which he succeeded in carrying that important measure—because, Gentlemen, allow me to remind you that it is very easy to talk at meetings like the present of introducing Bills into Parliament, and passing them, but the fact is that it is very difficult even for a Minister to pass a Bill. But no human imagination can conceive the labours, the difficulties, the discountenancing perplexities, of the private member who attempts to legislate on any subject of importance, and therefore I have always myself considered that the conduct of Lord Elcho in this matter cannot be too highly praised. Remember that by the old law of contract between master and servant, the servant who broke the contract was guilty of a criminal act, while the master was exempt from all such consequences. It is difficult, now that the change is made, now that we have broken the chain of custom which reconciles us to many anomalies, it is difficult to conceive that such a law could subsist in Great Britain. Yet that law did exist in Great Britain—I won't say unchallenged—but certainly not amended—only twelve months ago. I say then that the man who could have the courage and the determination and the happiness to carry such an improvement of the laws of his country deserves the gratitude and approbation of his countrymen. But with reference to the observation with which I started. I may say that I never heard that Lord Elcho was looked upon as what is called an advanced Liberal, or that it was in consequence of his very profound conviction of opinions that bear that colour that he was induced to come forward and make that triumphant effort, in which he succeeded.

Well, Gentlemen, I think I have shown you that there are good grounds to believe that my opinion is just—that there is no necessary antagonism between the interests of those classes that are popularly described as the Conservative classes and the labouring classes of this country. My opinions on this subject have been expressed not only in Parliament, but by other modes, not so important, to which the Chairman has referred. I have always looked on the interests of the labouring classes as essentially the most conservative interests of the country. The rights of labour have been to me always as sacred as the rights of pro-



perty, and I have always thought that those who were most interested in the stability and even in the glory of a State are the great mass of the population, happy to enjoy the privileges of freemen under good laws, and proud at the same time of the country which confers on its inhabitants a name of honour and of glorious reputation in every quarter of the globe. So much, then, with reference to that measure which we have passed last session, and which you, I am glad to see, so fully appreciate—so much with reference to my individual influence in the carrying of that measure, which you see was much simpler than it is described in the newspapers, and so much with reference to the general sentiments and principles of the party which for thirty years I have acted with in Parliament, with regard to the interest which we take in the general welfare of our countrymen—those countrymen, I am proud to say, who, by the united influence of that party, are soon about to exercise the noblest privileges of freemen.

But, Gentlemen, I ought not to forget that in the Address which you have presented to me, and for which I feel, I can assure you from the bottom of my heart, most deeply gratified, you have not only referred to the pass, but have thrown a prophetic eye over the impending future. Gentlemen, you have enumerated in the concluding paragraphs of your Address the various questions which may, which must, attract the attention of senates, and may agitate the fortunes of realms and empires. You appear, many of you, from the tone which you have adopted, to have very decided opinions on these questions. Allow me, as a practical man, without wishing to offend anybody present, to say that in the catalogue of questions which you have referred to are contained all those important political problems which the wisest statesmen and the most powerful Ministers have hitherto not been able to solve. Whether your confidence would be increased in me on this occasion if I came forward with a solution, I will not attempt to decide. But having a great respect for the opinions of Scotchmen, believing that not merely from their education but from their race they are a very shrewd and discriminating people, I am rather inclined to conclude that if I were to offer a solution of all these questions on the instant—even if it agreed with the opinions and prejudices of the large majority present—instead of their confidence being increased in their guest they would say this man is much too quick for us—we would rather trust our fortunes and the interests of the country to one who pondered and hesitated a little before he gave such definite opinions. I take it for granted that, like all prudent men, you are fond of detail;

because, after all, upon the perfect knowledge and right appreciation of detail the settlement of great questions mainly depends. And, Gentlemen, I think I may venture to say that upon none of the questions which you have introduced in these last paragraphs of your Address—although you may have arrived at certain conclusions, which so far govern your conduct that you have a right to call upon those who regulate your affairs to give their earnest consideration to the subjects, in order that anomalies may be removed, and injurious consequences remedied. Still I very much doubt whether there is anybody present who is prepared upon any of these questions to suggest measures which practically and completely would realise the somewhat vague conclusion which influences his general opinion. Well, Gentlemen, there are one or two of these subjects on which I may speak with more confidence. You express a desire that a Reform Bill should be introduced into next session of Parliament in which franchises of not less importance should be secured for the people of Scotland than I am happy to say have been secured to the people of England. Upon that subject, Gentlemen, I can speak with confidence, because it is one which I have entered into and mastered, and my colleagues have duly considered it. It is their intention to introduce, and at the earliest possible occasion, a Bill to improve the representation of the people in Scotland, and certainly I shall be no party to the introduction of that Bill if it offers to the people of Scotland less franchises than have been secured to the people of England. Gentlemen, the question of the Irish Church, to which you have referred, engages, no doubt, the attention of the public mind; but I should think that you cannot forget that even at this moment there is a Commission just appointed to inquire into the condition of that Establishment: and I should think such practical men as those whom I am now addressing would look upon a Minister with little confidence who left London, having sanctioned a commission of inquiry into the Irish Church, and then came to Edinburgh to inform those whom he is addressing of the policy which her Majesty's Ministers intended to pursue. Gentlemen, I will say nothing now upon the laws which affect the combination of workmen. I entirely agree with Lord Derby that it would be a most impolitic and unjust course to support any laws which would oppose the combination of workmen, or at all affect those unions which they have thought fit to establish for the preservation and protection of their interests. But if the workmen come forward and ask Parliament to consider their case, because they have not the means under the existing law of asserting their rights, why then I say that we are per-

fectly justified in suggesting that the whole subject should be investigated, and that the workman should not only be secured his rights, but called upon to fulfil his duties. Gentlemen, I will not touch upon the condition of the working classes which you have brought under my consideration—though I might do so, I think, with some advantage at the present moment—because I have already trespassed too long upon your time. But when you call the attention of her Majesty's Government to the condition of our workhouses, and the absolute necessity of Government interference and improvement, I would say that I don't accept that as a censorious intimation on the part of my friends who have submitted to me this Address ; but rather as availing themselves of an adroit opportunity of introducing a subject which, I think, the present Government may look to with some self-complacency. Because I think no one will deny that we are the first Government that have attempted—successfully attempted—to deal with the condition of the workhouses, and the condition of the workhouses in that portion of the kingdom where it is most difficult to grapple with the local powers who produce those consequences which have been so much deprecated. I say we are the first Government that vigorously, completely, and efficiently dealt with the deplorable condition of the workhouses in the great metropolis of the empire—a measure which has obtained those advantageous consequences and results which you desire. Therefore, upon that subject, Gentlemen, I will only observe that this expression of opinion upon it by a meeting so influential and so spontaneous as the present, is one which will encourage and embolden us to pursue that course which we have hitherto pursued with so much success, and which you have ratified by your approbation.

But, Gentlemen, you remark there is one subject of paramount importance, far beyond any of those to which you have referred and I have noticed, which demands the consideration of the State—that is, the education of the people. Now, Gentlemen, I may be permitted to say it required no addresses to be offered to me, even by meetings so numerous and influential as the present—representing, as I think will now fairly be admitted, the opinions of a great body of the working classes of the city of Edinburgh—I say that there required no addresses to be presented to me to enlist my best feelings and my utmost energies in a cause which I have ever deemed so paramount and sacred. I have ever considered that the education of the people of the United Kingdom could not be too much developed. Looking to the immense empire which depends on the qualities of so limited a population, comparatively, as inhabit the united isles,



I have felt that it is the first duty of a statesman to take care that the most responsible man in the world—and that is a British citizen—should be capable of fulfilling the august duties that by our constitution and our imperial fate have devolved upon him. I maintain, when you have only at the most a population of thirty millions to support the untiring efforts and the almost incredible intelligence which are necessary to maintain an empire of the magnitude of that which Queen Victoria presides over—I maintain it is absolutely necessary that your British subject should be a man who exceeds in his resources and power more than one man of any other country. Well, Gentlemen, how is that to be fulfilled? How is that great end to be obtained but by the education of the people? Now, I learn that there is at the present moment a fashion on the subject. A great many people who never thought much of the education of the people are all for education as the only means of escaping the dreadful consequences that must result from the passing of the Reform Bill. Now, Gentlemen, I cannot promise you to make greater exertions in the cause of education than I have hitherto made; and I think I may say on the part of her Majesty's Government that, totally irrespective of the Reform Bill, they consider popular education is one of the greatest duties which can possibly interest and command the consideration of a Government. Gentlemen, I cannot believe that the men who will be called upon to exercise the franchise are not sufficiently educated at the present moment to fulfil that trust. I have no doubt that the generations who follow them with the advantages which are preparing for them may fulfil the trust in a manner more complete and more adapted to the exigencies of coming times; but as a broad principle, I am bound to say that I believe every man who will exercise the franchise under the new law will be, speaking generally, perfectly competent, so far as his general information and his means of forming an opinion are concerned, to fulfil that trust—or if I did not, I should have been unpardonable in introducing such a Bill to the consideration of Parliament. It is not to depreciate the importance of popular education, but rather to warn you against the designs of those who are taking advantage of a moment of agitation—of fear and alarm in some quarters perhaps—to induce you to enter into arrangements which you may afterwards have to regret, that I make this remark. The subject of education must be dealt with with the greatest thought and consideration. It would be most unwise at once to blot out from the slate all that in the last thirty years we have with such pains and such difficulty accomplished. We must utilise as far as possible all exist-



ing machinery and all influences that are acting in favour of the great and sacred cause of popular education. We must supplement, we must invigorate, we must add to those powers; but it would be most unwise on your part if you agree rashly to terminate all that exists, without securing an equivalent and even superior arrangement. I am not prepared, Gentlemen, to say that in a civilisation so very various and complicated as that which prevails among the population of the United Kingdom, an identical system would suit all parts of the empire. But with regard to Scotland, I think your course is clear. You have had in old days, and to a certain degree you enjoy, the advantage of a system of national education. After all, whatever they may say, it has prevailed for two centuries, and you would be the most ungrateful of men if you did not recognise the advantages which have resulted from it, and which have marked you out among the nations of the world as men who have been most favoured by that wise institution of your country. So far as I can form an opinion, the general principles upon which your national system of education in Scotland is founded are wise, and I think durable principles. But no doubt that, as time has flown on, the course of two centuries has so altered the circumstances of your country that the application of these principles is no longer satisfactory or adequate. And in my opinion the time has arrived when, without confounding yourselves and complicating your position by connecting your necessities and claims with those of other people and other places—the time has come when, practically considering the question, you ought to achieve some great improvement in that respect. You are aware the subject has engaged the attention of a Royal Commission. The report of that Commission, distinguished by much ability, has now for some time been under the consideration of the Government; and I shall be disappointed, if it be not in the power of her Majesty's Government during the next session of Parliament to introduce a measure with respect to national education in Scotland which will render adequate and complete that ancient and famous system to which this country owes so much of its benefits and its success.

Gentlemen, on the subject of education there are one or two points that I have noticed perhaps in other places, but I hardly think it is inappropriate that I should touch upon them here, because they most concern the class of men I am addressing to-night. Now, all those great measures which are somewhat cloudily brought forward with regard to national education, universally refer to primary education. There is no doubt the difficulty of national education is involved in that question of elementary

or primary education. I cannot say that the condition of our primary education is at all satisfactory in any of the countries which form the United Kingdom of the Queen ; but we must remember this, that the condition of affairs thirty years ago, when the great movement commenced with regard to the improvement of our primary education, was infinitely more grievous ; and although there are great wants and deficiencies at present, still a greater advance has been made with regard to the subject of elementary and primary education in this country than in any other country I can refer to. But that part of the subject I now dismiss. There is, however, one other portion of the subject which does not refer to elementary or primary education, which refers to the condition, the interests, the fortunes of adults, of the men I am addressing, and that is technical education—education in the arts you practise, upon which your welfare depends, in which your prosperity is involved, and in which, if you do not achieve excellence, you will deteriorate not merely as citizens but as human beings. That is a question of vast importance, and it depends much upon yourselves and upon the state of public opinion in this country. Now, it is utterly impossible that the British artisan can maintain the position he has hitherto occupied by a mere traditionary following of the methods and manners which those who have preceded have delivered to him. The Prince Consort, one of the wisest and most accomplished of men, was the first to call the attention of the country to this subject. His views were received at first with great incredulity, with that arrogance which ignorance always assumes ; but the Prince Consort was right—he knew he was right—and he knew that the course of coming events would prove that he was right. He knew that the foreign mechanic in the arts which he practised was fast rivalling, and if rivalling must ultimately excel, the British artisan. Well, he took steps to arrest that course of deterioration ; he was the first man who encouraged and established an universal exhibition, which, without painfully offending the feelings of any British artizan, would place him in amicable but evident competition with the productions of other mechanics. You know the consequences of that ; and since that movement took place, which I call the Albertine movement, from the extraordinary beneficial effect it had on the condition of the English mechanic, there has been a conviction which I think has now entered the mind of the public, and of mechanics themselves, that this subject is one much too serious to be neglected ; that the fate and fortunes of a great body of her Majesty's subjects depend upon rightly understanding it ; and

that it becomes the duty of the State, as well as of those men themselves, to take such measures as shall greatly improve the technical education of the British people. You must have, as you have had in some degree, schools of art promoted and established in this country. Your manufactures will languish and disappear if you fail in the arts of design; and those who practise those of metallurgy must be conscious that it requires at the present moment on their part the utmost energy and enterprise to maintain the position which Britain has hitherto filled in the markets of the world. This is a portion of public education in which the Government can assist the British workman. It is one in which the Government has to a certain degree already assisted; but in which, in my opinion, there ought to be a greater development of public assistance and attention.

Gentlemen, I will now touch upon a point I have alluded to in another place, but which on the matter of education I cannot here pass unnoticed. When I hear that the British people are not educated, that they will be incapable of exercising what is very natural to a Briton, whether he possessed it before or now—namely, the suffrage—I say that we forget that in this country there is a source of education perpetually going on—of secular education of the highest class, which fits men, more than any other means I know, for the performance of public and political duties, and that is the influence, thank God, of a free press. When the condition of the people and the education of the people is brought forward, and the statistics of Continental nations are adduced to prove the advantageous position which the population in those countries fill, and the comparatively disadvantageous one occupied by the people of the United Kingdom, I always recollect that these philosophers and statisticians forget in their views the influence of the great power, the great educating power, to which I have referred, and I remember with pride and with consolation that England, and England alone, is the country in which a free press practically and really exists. That is an educational power of the highest influence. It is maintained and is exercised in this country under, I believe, the highest responsibility. But whether it be the conduct of those who exercise it, or whether it be the temper of the people to whom it is addressed, I care not—the influence of the press in England ceases if it is not a moral influence, and if it is not exercised upon those principles which you have been taught to look upon as necessary, not merely for the preservation of society, but for the highest considerations that can influence man.



Gentlemen, I have too long trespassed upon you, but permit me to say, as you have offered me this Address, that it is not the least gratifying circumstance which has attended my visit to Edinburgh. I am happy, particularly after the rumours and reports that reached me—I am happy to have had an opportunity of addressing, I hope you will acknowledge with frankness, so numerous and so intelligent an assembly. I will now merely revert, in conclusion, to the original cause that this Address has been presented to me—namely, that of your complete sympathy with the Government of her Majesty in passing a great measure of Parliamentary reform, and your sympathy with the difficulties which they had to encounter in carrying that important Act. Let me, not in advice or admonition, but as one who is really your friend, express my conviction that—possessing those great privileges which will soon be yours, as they now are of the people of England, you will exercise them in a manner becoming intelligent and patriotic men. Disappoint all the forebodings of your foes or of your false friends. Prove that you are Britons influenced by the same feelings, the same passions, the same interests, the same high and noble aspirations that influence all other classes of Britons. Prove that you love your country ; prove that you are proud of belonging to an ancient kingdom which possesses the noblest of constitutions, and do not listen to those who pretend to you that society is to be revolutionised because the people are trusted. Do not listen to those who tell you that you have been invested with democratic rights, and that, therefore, you must effect great changes in the fortunes and form of one of the most considerable nations and Governments that ever existed. Be proud of the confidence which the constituted authorities of the country have reposed in you, by investing you with popular privileges ; prove that you know the value of such privileges ; and that you will exercise them to maintain the institutions of your country, and to increase its power, its glory, and its fame.









